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Dillard, James Hardy

Fourteen years of the Jeanes Fund

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[1923]

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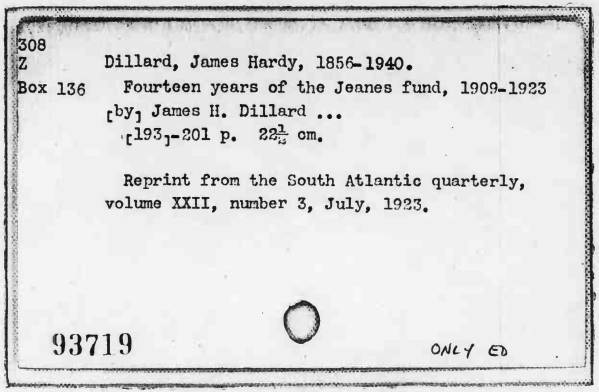
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Dillard, James Hardy, 1856-1940.
Fourteen years of the Jeanes fund, 1909-1923
[by] James H. Dillard ...
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Fourteen Years of the Jeanes Fund

1909-1923

JAMES H. DILLARD

Reprint from the South Atlantic Quarterly, Volume XXII
Number 3, July, 1923

Fourteen Years of the Jeanes Fund

JAMES H. DILLARD
Charlottesville, Va.

"Others have given to the large schools; if I could, I should like to help the little country schools." These were the words of Miss Anna T. Jeanes, a Quakeress of Philadelphia, when talking to a visitor in regard to making a contribution toward the education of the colored children in the South. Not long after this conversation she gave a million dollars, the income of which was to be spent in "helping the small rural schools." The work founded on this donation has been going on for fourteen years, and has influenced to a considerable extent rural education throughout the South. "The Jeanes teacher in my county," wrote a superintendent from Alabama, "has revolutionized the sentiment for negro education and incidentally changed the aspect of race relations." Testimony similar to this, though perhaps not quite so strong, has come from many parts of the South, proving the statesmanship of Miss Jeanes's thought and the value of her gift.

From time to time numerous inquiries have come in regard to the life of Miss Jeanes. It has been difficult to get much information. For what we know we are mainly indebted to Miss Emma Walter of Philadelphia, a distant relative. Miss Jeanes was born in Philadelphia on April 7, 1822, the youngest of ten children, all of whom passed away before her death on September 24, 1907. "There is so little to say," writes Miss Walter. "When Anna was four years old her mother died, and upon her sister Mary devolved her care and education. It was no

easy task as she was a child of strong will. All through her long life she thought for herself, and her opinion once formed could not be shaken by any one. She had a keen sense of humor and a very merry, musical laugh. She was a great reader, particularly of books on India, China, Egypt, Japan, and on the history of the religions of the world. She read French with ease and had some talent as a painter.

"About 1900, when she had now inherited all the accumulated fortune of her family, she decided to build and endow a Boarding Home for aged and infirm Friends belonging to the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting. The building was erected according to her ideas, and here in 1904 she took up her residence. From this time her health and strength gradually failed. Her life had always been exceedingly retired and uneventful, with few acquaintances and no intimate friends outside her immediate family. She had been for many years an annual contributor to all the non-sectarian charities of Philadelphia. In her later years she gave large sums to most of these charities as well as to the Yearly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia, of which she and all her family were members. She was a life member of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, the Philadelphia Zoological Society, and the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. She published two books."

The books here referred to are, *The Sacrificer and the Non-Sacrificer,* published by Porter and Coates, 1886; and *Fancy's Flight,* a collection of original verses, printed by Howard W. Jenkins, 921 Arch Street, Philadelphia. The first of these shows an immense amount of reading in oriental literature. The poems show deep religious thought and a genuine gift of poetic expression. They were not printed with her name. The volume now in possession of the Jeanes Board was her private copy, with her name and two additional poems on the fly leaves, written in her own handwriting.

The Friends Boarding Home, which Miss Jeanes built in Germantown, was, as has been said, her place of residence in her last years. It was there that she conferred with Dr. Frissell, Dr. Washington, Mr. Peabody, and others, in regard to making donations in aid of negro education in the South. It was there, after her donation of the million dollars for helping

rural schools, that a committee consisting of Mr. Taft, Mr. Peabody and myself visited her in regard to a matter connected with the investment of the funds. Mr. Taft presented the matter in his kindliest manner. Miss Jeanes was a very small woman and appeared to weigh not more than eighty or ninety pounds. Her right hand, badly swollen, rested on the flat arm of her chair. She talked in the brightest and most cheerful way, but politely declined to make changes in the original terms of the gift or to do more than refer us to her business adviser. This was a few months before her death.

On a later visit to the Home, after the death of Miss Jeanes, I heard that her last years were very happy. She lived in a plain room, like the rooms of the other inmates of the Home, and would not permit any special attention to herself in the way of food or comforts. All her acquaintances in the Home and in Philadelphia with whom I had the opportunity of speaking mentioned her strong dislike for any notoriety in regard to her many acts of benevolence.

The legal title of the Fund, established by the gift of a million dollars from Miss Jeanes, is the Negro Rural School Fund, Anna T. Jeanes Foundation. It is generally known simply as the Jeanes Fund. The deed of trust is dated April 22, 1907. The certificate of incorporation is dated November 20, 1907. There had been several more or less informal meetings of the proposed Board, but the first regular meeting of the full Board was held on February 29, 1908. The Board consisted of seventeen members, as follows: David C. Barrow, Andrew Carnegie, James H. Dillard, Hollis Burke Frissell, Abraham Grant, Belton Gilreath, George McAneny, Samuel C. Mitchell, Robert R. Moton, James C. Napier, Robert C. Ogden, Walter H. Page, George Foster Peabody, Robert L. Smith, William H. Taft, Booker T. Washington, Talcott Williams. The officers elected were: James H. Dillard, President and Director; Walter H. Page, Vice-President; Robert R. Moton, Secretary; George Foster Peabody, Treasurer; and Booker T. Washington, Chairman of the Executive Committee.

On the death of Bishop Grant, H. T. Kealing was elected a member of the Board in 1911. On the death of Mr. Ogden, John T. Emlen was elected in 1914. On the death of Dr.

Washington, Emmett J. Scott was elected in 1916. On the death of Dr. Frissell and the resignation of Mr. Gilreath, Theodore D. Bratton and William P. Few were elected in 1918. On the death of Dr. Kealing and of Ambassador Page, George W. Clinton and James E. Gregg were elected in 1919. On the death of Mr. Carnegie and the resignation of Mr. McAneny, Charles E. Mason and C. Everett Bacon were elected in 1920. Since the death of Bishop Clinton no one has been elected to fill the vacancy.

The time between the organization of the Board in February 1908 and the following Fall was spent in looking over the field, making special investigations here and there, and considering how best the income of the Fund could be used. Many letters were received making suggestions and asking for help. In some places there were exaggerated notions of the size of the Fund. A common thought was that a million dollars would be at once distributed. Some of the letters received were amusing. One remote teacher wrote to ask whether his school was going to have any "fun" that year. Another individual wanting personal assistance began his letter by saying, "I am a genious." But most of the letters were sympathetically helpful and wisely suggestive.

A few letters were received from county superintendents asking for aid in various directions for their colored schools. One fact was clear,—that, since the money was to aid small rural schools and these schools were mostly public schools, the work must proceed in coöperation with the regular public school authorities. These letters, therefore, from county superintendents were especially welcomed. But how best could the limited income of the Fund be made to count for the greatest good to the greatest number over so large an area? It was a problem.

After much consideration the decision was that we apply to country schools a plan already in use in certain cities, namely, to employ a teacher, trained in handicraft, to serve several schools. The idea of putting the schools more in touch with the immediate conditions of the life in the community around them was then just becoming a much-discussed problem. Cities had employed teachers of sewing and woodwork to go from school to school on certain days, and it was thought that such a

plan might be worked in the rural districts. The first teacher employed by a county superintendent to do such work and to be paid by the Jeanes Fund was in Iberville Parish, Louisiana, where Mr. L. E. Messick was superintendent. The teacher was Mrs. M. L. Sorrell. Her salary was $42.50 a month for eight months. She was to have headquarters in the school at Plaquemine, the parish seat, where she was to work two days in the week, devoting the other three days to five schools within fairly easy reach. Fifty or more such extension teachers were gradually placed and began their work during the new session of 1908-9. It is interesting to note that Superintendent Messick is still in office and that Mrs. Sorrell still holds her position. Her salary is now $80 a month for ten months, of which the parish board pays $45 a month.

Among the early letters received from county superintendents was one from Mr. Jackson Davis, then superintendent of Henrico County, Virginia, who had come in touch with Hampton, and had heard of the beginnings of industrial work in colored schools in certain parts of Virginia. He wanted an industrial teacher to cover his whole county. This proposition was gladly received and the whole-county plan was urged wherever arrangements could be satisfactorily made. After some consultation Mr. Davis employed Miss Virginia E. Randolph, who also still holds the position. The choice proved a most excellent one. At the end of the session she printed a brief report, telling, for each of the schools visited, the amount of industrial work and general improvements accomplished. This simple report told the story so well in concrete terms that we printed a thousand copies and mailed them to county superintendents throughout the South.

From counties where the industrial teacher, or extension teacher as she was then called, confined her work to four or five schools, had come letters asking why she could not go to others. Furthermore it was found that the tendency was for the industrial teacher to give too much of her time to the one school at which she had her headquarters. Manifestly the Henrico plan was much to be preferred where it could be put into practice. This was not easy at first. There were difficulties of transportation; but gradually, during the first two

years, the extension teachers all became supervising industrial teachers for the whole county, or for as many schools in the county as the superintendent might designate. It was in the way of aiding in transportation that the county boards, at the suggestion of the superintendent, began to give their first financial support to the work.

Thanks to the fortunate selection of the teachers and to their good service and fine spirit, the work prospered. No cut-and-dried rules were laid down. The supervising teacher was to introduce and supervise simple forms of industrial work, but beyond this she was free to follow out any line of neighborhood improvement which might open up, or for which she might feel some special fitness. The point was to get a good teacher and let her do the rest. Some excelled in home visiting, some in raising money, some in forming clubs, some in health work, some in promoting gardens. It was always something good and something to be done. There are in fact no words too strong to express the admiration which any one who has known these Jeanes teachers must feel for the ability and devotion which from the first they have shown in their work. There have been no nobler pioneers and missionaries than these humble teachers. They have literally gone about doing good. Their occasional conferences, by states or group of states, have been unique among educational meetings. Their simple, straightforward reports of their work in the background have been a revelation and an inspiration to all school officials and other visitors who have from time to time attended these gatherings.

Thus did the work of these traveling supervising teachers, who came to be known simply as Jeanes Teachers, seem to open up as the appointed mission of the Jeanes Fund. Occasional calls in other directions were at times so pressing and so evidently fitting that here and there a little assistance was given. Here a term was extended, here a building was repaired, here some aid was given for a new building, here a donation was made to enable the employment of a special industrial teacher in a larger rural school, here some help was given for promoting a summer school for teachers. But these were side issues. The revenues of the Fund were too small to accomplish any appreciable results, in so large a field, along any of these much-needed directions. It would be like throwing pebbles into quick-sand.

In a report made to the Jeanes Board ten years ago emphasis was laid on the great need of some movement for better school-houses in the rural districts. It was pointed out how impossible it was to teach neatness, orderliness, and thrift in some shack where every look of the child rested upon evidences to the contrary. Many appeals came for aid in building school-houses, some from county superintendents, some from the Jeanes Teachers with the approval of their county superintendents, all offering financial coöperation. Little did we then know that the great need was soon to be supplied by the splendid donations of Mr. Julius Rosenwald. It is a satisfaction to state in this connection that, according to the agent of the Rosenwald Fund, Mr. S. L. Smith, a large proportion of the projects for building the Rosenwald rural school-houses are due to the efforts of the Jeanes Teachers.

When the work of the supervising teachers began to be known, the demand soon exceeded the means of supply. In spite of the beginning of appropriations from public funds, there was call for additional outside aid. This came, and we make grateful acknowledgment. Without such aid the work would have been severely hampered. In 1911-12 the newly established Phelps-Stokes Fund gave $2,500 to aid in paying salaries; in 1912-13 the same Fund gave $2,500 for salaries, and $1,000 for aid in building and equipment; in 1913-14 $2,500 for salaries, and $1,500 for building and equipment. In 1914 the General Education Board began its donations in promoting the extension of the work of the supervising teachers. In 1914-15 this Board gave $5,000; in 1915-16, $11,000; in 1916-17, $11,400; in 1917-18, $16,000; in 1918-19, $20,000. At this time the work of the Home Makers clubs, which had been supported by the General Educational Board, was taken over by the agents of the Federal appropriations, and the Board turned its contributions for rural work in the direction of larger support for the Jeanes Teachers. Thus in 1919-20 we received altogether from the General Education Board $60,988; in 1920-21, $75,011; and in 1921-22, $80,000.

Most of the aid given for the extension of terms has come from the outside. We have spent in this way only the small amount of $14,044, of which $9,303 came through donations from Mr. Rosenwald. The plan was to give the amount needed for one month, on condition that the community also add a month. Although aid in extending the term of a single school here and there is of little account in influencing the general condition, it was thought that where as many as six schools in a county would make the extension the general result would be good, and it has proved to be so. The point was to do enough in a county to create an atmosphere. When a county superintendent in Tennessee reported the offer to his school board, a member asked, "You say this offer comes from the outside? I move that we ourselves extend the term of every colored school in the county one month," and the resolution was passed. There has been much improvement in the extension of terms in rural schools, but there is still room for stimulation from the outside.

The most gratifying fact in the work of the Jeanes Fund has been the welcome and the gradual increase of support received from the local school officials, on whom success has always depended. From the first we have helped only at the request of the county superintendent and under his direction. What success the work of the Fund has attained is largely due to the interest of the state and county superintendents and in later years to the wise and energetic direction of the State Agents for colored schools connected with the various State Departments of Education. During the past ten years there has been a steady increase of financial support from public school funds. In 1912-13 the county funds contributed to the work a total amount of only $3,402; in 1921-22 the amount was $114,521. At present, in 1923, there are 266 Jeanes Teachers, and some counties have similar work unconnected with the Jeanes Fund.

It may be doubted whether anywhere in the world a more complete illustration of coöperation can be found than in the present work of education for the colored children of the South. And it is coöperation without conflict, and except in rare instances without wasteful duplication. It is little short of wonderful how the various agencies dovetail and support each other.

The General Education Board, the Rosenwald Fund, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the Slater Fund (especially through the County Training Schools, which are also aided by the General Education Board, the Carnegie Corporation, and Mr. Rosenwald), the Jeanes Fund and the various Church and Missionary Boards are all not only doing their work, but doing it in the spirit of coöperation with one another, and with the state departments of education.

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